



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Responsible Reef Practices for visitors to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

May 2006

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is a vast and beautiful area enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year. We can all play a role in keeping the Great Barrier Reef great by following some simple practices when visiting the Marine Park.

Anchoring and Mooring

Frequent anchoring at popular sites can destroy fragile corals. To help protect coral there are public moorings at many frequently visited sites. It is mandatory to comply with designated 'no anchoring areas' in the Marine Park and coral must not be damaged or removed. In the Cairns and Hinchinbrook areas there are specific requirements for anchoring vessels longer than 35 metres and, in the Cairns area, anchoring usually must be 50 metres from a mooring and 200 metres from a pontoon.

- Examine the area before anchoring to find the best location
- Anchor in sand or mud away from corals
- Carry enough chain and line for the depth you want to anchor in
- Use the correct anchor for your situation and environment



- Use only as much chain as you need to hold the vessel, without compromising safety
- Keep watch to make sure the anchor isn't dragging
- Motor towards the anchor when hauling it in
- Use public moorings where available
- When picking up a mooring:
 - Motor into the wind toward the buoy
 - Avoid running over the pick-up line
 - Use a boat hook to retrieve the pick-up line
 - Attach the line to a strong point or bollard on the vessel
- When using a public mooring, read and follow the advice given on an information disc attached to the pick-up line

- Vacate a public mooring as soon as you can to allow access for others.


Bird Watching

The Marine Park is home to thousands of seabirds. Many islands are important breeding and nesting sites. To ensure the birds' safety, some islands are specially protected and some have seasonal closures and speed restrictions. All seabirds are protected in Queensland and it is illegal to take any birds or their eggs.

- Whenever possible keep well away from colonies of roosting or nesting seabirds or shorebirds and always try not to disturb them
- If you cannot avoid going near a colony, always keep a low profile
- When near birds, be quiet, avoid rapid or sudden

our great barrier reef
let's keep it great





movements, crouch low and use existing cover

- Keep noise to a minimum and do not sound horns, sirens or loudspeakers
- If seabirds exhibit stressful behaviour, such as raucous calling or swooping, leave the area immediately
- Never try to touch birds, chicks or eggs
- Avoid using torches or bright lights near or in bird colonies
- Take particular care at the following sensitive times:
 - Late afternoon and early evening
 - The hottest part of the day
 - Wet and/or cold weather
 - Moonlit nights
 - When eggs, naked or downy chicks are in their nests
- Keep dogs well away from seabirds and shorebirds.

Boating and Yachting

Visitors should always be alert and careful when boating in the Marine Park. Vessel groundings can damage large areas of corals and collisions with large marine creatures can injure or kill the animal. In some popular areas, there is a limit to the group size you may take to bays and reefs.

- Be on the lookout for marine animals and travel slowly in areas where they are known to be present
- Go slow near any islands and cays where seabirds are nesting or roosting
- Check for nesting seabirds or turtles before pulling your vessel onto the beach

- Slow down to minimise the wake when approaching reef edges, shorelines and beaches
- Be considerate of others when motoring or anchoring near them and match your activities to the setting around you
- Refuel onshore where possible, using the correct gear and having cleanup equipment ready.

Collecting

Collecting, by any means, of aquarium fish, shellfish and other animals and plants, whether dead or alive, must be conducted in accordance with the Zoning Plan and regulations. Collecting is allowed in the General Use Zone (light blue), Habitat Protection Zone (dark blue) and Conservation Park Zone (yellow) and visitors may generally collect up to five of any one species. To collect greater numbers, or to collect coral or protected species, requires a specific Marine Parks permit. To confirm what can and cannot be taken, contact the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

- Look but don't touch so plants and animals are left for others to enjoy
- Take only what you need and abide by official limits
- Return all unwanted specimens to the water carefully and quickly, preferably to the exact location where you found them
- Treat all specimens humanely and carefully as handling some specimens may be dangerous.

Diving and Snorkelling

Scuba diving and snorkelling are the most popular ways to experience the Marine Park. Recent

studies show most divers cause little detectable damage to corals. Careful use of diving fins and buoyancy control are critical.

- Check you are weighted correctly before diving and practise buoyancy control away from coral or reef animals
- Secure diving equipment such as spare regulators and gauges to your body
- Move slowly and deliberately in the water, relax and take your time
- Avoid leaning on, standing on, holding onto or touching any part of the reef and take extra care when taking photographs underwater
- Avoid touching anything with your fins and try not to disturb the sand
- Observe animals and do not touch, poke, handle, prod or chase them
- Do not disturb the environment as all creatures play an important role in the Marine Park.

Fishing

Zoning arrangements, bag and size limits, tackle restrictions and seasonal closures are used to ensure fishing is sustainable in the Marine Park. Fishing is not allowed in the Marine National Park Zone (green), Scientific Research Zone (orange) and Preservation Zone (pink). There are some requirements on the amount of gear that can be used in other zones. Some fish species are totally protected. Fresh fish parts must not be discarded unless caught in the Marine Park. Discarding fishing line and tackle in the Marine Park is prohibited by law. Careful treatment and handling of fish caught maintains



the quality of fish and gives released fish their best chance of survival.

- Study zoning maps for the area you are visiting to ensure fishing is allowed
- Take only what you need and abide by possession and size limits
- Return all undersized or unwanted fish to the water carefully and quickly
- If you intend keeping a fish, remove it from the hook or net quickly and kill it humanely
- Never feed bread, cooked seafood or processed food to fish
- Take all your rubbish home including line, tackle and bait bags.

Motorised Water Sports

Visitors who are jet skiing, parasailing and water skiing should always look out for wildlife and be considerate to other users. To protect wildlife and preserve a natural setting, motorised water sport may not be undertaken in the Remote Natural Area in the far north and in some locations in the Cairns, Hinchinbrook and Whitsundays Planning Areas.

- Be considerate of other reef users in the area
- Stay a safe distance away from people in the water
- Be on the lookout for marine animals
- Go slow near islands and the coast, especially near popular beaches and where seabirds are nesting or roosting
- Stay away from shallow water near reefs.

Around Turtles

Turtles are often seen in the Marine Park and come ashore at night to lay eggs. They are easily disturbed by light, noise and movement. By following some simple practices, it is possible to watch the females laying eggs and the hatchlings emerging from the sand without disturbing them. All sea turtles are protected in Queensland and it is illegal to take any turtles or their eggs.

- Keep your distance from turtles, allowing them to continue their normal activities
- Do not approach a turtle emerging from the water or moving up the beach
- Limit your use of light and never shine lights directly onto turtles
- Stay well clear of turtles nesting, covering their nests or emerging hatchlings
- Do not touch, grab or lean on turtles, hatchlings or eggs and allow hatchlings to dig themselves out
- Avoid loud noise and sudden movements.

Around Whales and Dolphins

Some whale and dolphin species live all year in our warm tropical waters and others migrate here each winter from the colder southern oceans. They rely on our waters as a safe place to feed and raise their young. It is particularly important you keep well away from whales and dolphins and don't chase or disturb them. All whales and dolphins in the Marine Park are protected and there are strict rules to follow when you are close to them. Check these at www.gbrmpa.gov.au.

- Be alert and watch for whales and dolphins at all times
- Slow down to minimise the risk of collision in areas where whales and dolphins have been sighted
- Avoid disturbing mother whales and their calves, especially from May to September
- Do not get in the water if you see a whale, and if you are already in the water do not disturb, chase or block the whale and, if possible, return to your vessel
- Be quiet when you are around a whale or dolphin
- If there is a sudden change in whale or dolphin behaviour, move away immediately.

Visiting Islands and Cays

In the Marine Park, most islands are carefully managed National Parks. A permit from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is required to camp on all island National Parks. Generators and compressors need a permit and amplified sound is not allowed. Zoning arrangements apply to the beaches and inshore waters.

- Check all gear for seeds, insects or vermin before landing
- Carry adequate communication equipment
- Be quiet around wildlife and fellow visitors
- Take your rubbish and any litter you find back to the mainland
- Do not use detergents, toothpaste or soap in creeks, streams or lakes and use only biodegradable products
- Use gas or liquid spirit stoves for cooking



- Always use toilets where provided but if there are no toilets, go at least 100 metres from campsites or water and bury faeces at least 15 cm deep
- Do not trample vegetation or break branches from trees and shrubs
- Do not touch or disturb nesting seabirds or turtles and avoid loud noise, strong lights or sudden movements near them.

Waste, Chemicals and Litter

Marine pollution, increasing nutrients and sedimentation in waterways that wash into the Marine Park has affected the quality of water in the area. Visitors should ensure their activities have a minimal effect by using environmentally friendly chemicals and disposing of all forms of waste correctly. Discarding garbage, including plastics, fishing nets and lines, oil products or chemicals within the Marine Park is prohibited by law. There are also special regulations governing the discharge of sewage. As these requirements may change from time to time, visitors should keep up-to-date at www.gbrmpa.gov.au.

- Store all sewage in holding tanks, if possible, and use pump-ashore facilities, where provided
- If you must discharge sewage at sea, do so in open water as far as possible from reefs and islands
- If there is no holding tank, do not use toilets or urinate in the water when near reefs or in enclosed bays
- Use biodegradable and environmentally friendly

chemicals for cleaning and maintenance

- Use biodegradable toilet paper
- Break down petroleum products in the bilge with biodegradable detergents and dispose of at recycling depots on shore
- Keep engines clean and in good condition and fix all leaks
- Keep a well-maintained cleanup kit on your vessel
- Secure all loose articles to prevent them blowing or falling overboard
- Bring your rubbish and any litter you find back to the mainland.

At Home

You can help protect the Marine Park by taking some simple everyday actions at home, work or school.

- When you go shopping take reusable shopping bags, rather

than using a new disposable plastic bag each time

- Keep your drains and gutters free of chemicals and rubbish
- Pick up litter and put it in the bin, recycle what you can
- Wash your car on the lawn instead of in your driveway or on the street
- Use compost to fertilise your garden, rather than shop-bought fertilisers
- Plant trees and groundcover around your home, farm and work area to capture rainwater, and to minimise runoff and soil erosion
- Participate in local community clean up days.

Want more information?

Go to 'Onboard – The Tourism Operator's Handbook for the Great Barrier Reef' available on our website and view up-to-date Responsible Reef Practices for tourism.

For Further Information

Visit the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's website:
www.gbrmpa.gov.au

Visit or write to us:
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PO Box 1379 Townsville Qld 4810
Australia

Call or send us a fax:
Phone: +61 7 4750 0700
Fax: +61 7 4772 6093

Send an email: info@gbrmpa.gov.au

Do your bit to look after it...

To report illegal activity or zoning related matters contact:
Day-to-Day Management Coordination Unit:
+61 7 4726 0510 or +61 7 3830 8246 (24hr)

To report illegal fishing
Fishwatch: 1800 017 116

To report sick, injured or dead animals or oil spills
EPA Hotline: 1300 130 372

To report vessel collisions, groundings or oil spills
AMSA: 1800 641 792

